



How does your **LANDSCAPE GROW?**

Trends for 2010

By Amanda N. Wegner

Whether the ground is frozen and covered in snow or soggy from late-winter rains, March is a great time to think about improving your landscape.

“In the past, people thought of their landscape simply as their back yard,” says Tyler Anderson, general manager, Avant Gardening and Landscape. “But now, it’s an inclusive part of your living space, just outdoors.”

You want your landscape to look good and fit your life, and like anything, landscaping is subject to trends. But 2010’s landscaping trends aren’t something you’ll regret at the end of the season.

Native landscapes

“It’s interesting to see people becoming more interested in native and sustainable landscapes for the homes,” says Pat Blair, president, Blair Lawn & Landscape.

Native plants have adapted to an area’s microclimate, meaning they require less maintenance, better cope with local pests, and are hardier than non-native plants.

Some good native plant choices, notes Blair, are dogwood, liatris, coneflowers and prairie dropseed grass, an ornamental grass.

The thing to remember with a native landscape, however, says Paul Ganshert, owner of

Resources

Avant Gardening & Landscaping
www.avantgardening.com
838-2054

Blair Lawn & Landscape
www.blairlandscape.com
255-1920

Ganshert Nursery & Landscapes
www.ganshert.com
274-2443

Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association-Madison chapter
www.landscapemadison.com

Ganshert Nursery & Landscapes, is “it’s not terribly showy, so if you want something elaborate, brimming with color, native might not be it.”

Smart water

“People are really getting savvy about rain water harvesting,” says Blair.

Adds Liza Lightfoot, owner of Avant Gardening & Landscaping: “Water is a great resource, and people want to keep it on their property.”

Rain barrels and rain gardens have long been the water-management systems of choice for eco-savvy homeowners and landscapers. But if you’re planning a hardscape installation such as a patio this season, consider a rainwater catch basin.

Blair explains that a catch basin, placed underneath a permeable paver patio, “catches” rainwater, which can then be reused for watering plants. “Barrels and basins are much like the cisterns people used in the ’30s and ’40s, just more sophisticated,” she says.

Ganshert does caution that permeable pavers are different than brick pavers. “Many homeowners think that because they have a patio made of bricks, it’s permeable. That’s not the case. Permeable pavers are specially designed for water reuse and management.”

Eating from your land

Edible landscapes that include fruits, vegetables, herbs and nuts “are a huge national trend,” says Lightfoot. “We are moving quickly toward permaculture and sustaining ourselves.”

Yes, raised beds for a vegetable garden is one way of incorporating edibles into your landscape, but a less-obvious way of landscape self-sufficiency is incorporating your edible plants with the rest of the plants and hardscape.

For instance, berry bushes are great alternatives to standard shrubs. Strawberries grown under trees make good groundcover. Most greens, including lettuces and kale, particularly purple kale, add stunning, variegated foliage to a perennial garden. Many herbs do well in rock gardens.

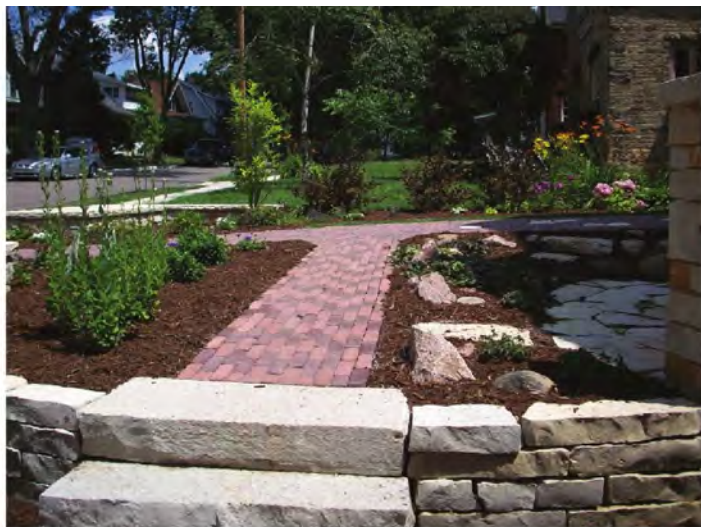
Gardens and edible landscapes do take time and require maintenance, says Lightfoot. “For the very busy person, maybe you join a CSA instead.”

Tips for choosing a landscaper

Meet face-to-face. “This is a relationship,” says Blair. “It helps to learn the designer’s personality and values, and see if you’re a good match.” Adds Ganshert: “You’re not going in to buy a widget. You’re buying a relationship.”

Check accreditations and associations. Lightfoot and Blair both include the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association, NARI (National Association of the Remodeling Industry) and Madison Area Builders Association (MABA) in their short lists. The American Society of Landscape Architects is another well-known national organization in the field. Inquire about licenses as well.

Buyer beware. Check references and years of service. Consider the firm’s overall professionalism as well. “Especially in this volatile market,” says Lightfoot, “there are a lot of unqualified people in Dane County in the ‘landscape’ business.”



Just like inside your home, outdoor living space includes many elements.

Photos provided by Blair Lawn and Landscape, Inc.